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POPULATION GROWTH AND FOREIGN AID

by

William A. Korn

	PAGE
DIMENSIONS OF WORLD POPULATION GROWTH	443
Chief Trouble Areas: Asia, Africa, Latin America	443
Dramatic Effects of Lowered Mortality Rates	444
Prospects for Further Decline in Death Rates	446
FOREIGN AID IN HEAVILY POPULATED AREAS	447
Malthusian Theories of Population Growth	447
Low Productivity in Overpopulated Countries	448
Insufficiency of Savings and Capital Formation	449
Need for Development Assistance From Outside	451
Plan for an American Revolving Loan Fund	452
OUTLOOK FOR CONTROLLING POPULATION GROWTH	454
Japan's Effective Campaign to Cut Birth Rate	455
Population Control Efforts in Other Countries	456
Importance of Religious and Social Attitudes	457
POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF POPULATION PROBLEM	459

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RICHARD M. BOECKEL, *Editor*

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POPULATION GROWTH AND FOREIGN AID

GROWTH of the populations of underdeveloped countries at an extraordinarily rapid rate is multiplying their problems and adding a new dimension to the whole question of foreign aid. The Eisenhower administration is making plans to create a sizable economic development fund to counter threats of Communist encroachment in countries "where moderate leaders despair of being able to lift their nations out of hopeless poverty and stagnation."¹ Even with outside assistance, however, prospects for improving living standards in these countries are seriously limited by the constant pressure of expanding population.

The United States itself has added 20 million persons to its population in the brief span since 1950. Current rates of growth, if maintained, will about double the present total of 170 million inhabitants by the end of the century. The chronic shortage of educational facilities is illustrative of economic strains imposed on this country by the added numbers. But the impact of population growth on available resources is far more severe in less fortunately situated countries.

CHIEF TROUBLE AREAS: ASIA, AFRICA, LATIN AMERICA

World population is expanding at a rate of 43 million persons a year, or more than 120,000 persons every day. There are nearly a billion more people in the world today than there were in 1920, and the present global population of about 2.8 billion is expected to approach 5 billion by the year 2000. Almost every country is experiencing growth, although rates of increase vary widely. The United States is growing more rapidly than the industrial nations of Europe, but not so rapidly as the less developed countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. These are the areas where, according to demographers and economists alike, a "population explosion" is well under way.

¹ Secretary of State Dulles before Senate Special Committee to Study the Foreign Aid Program, Apr. 8, 1957.

Editorial Research Reports

The meaning of this term is graphically demonstrated in the case of Egypt, whose population of more than 23 million is increasing at the high rate of close to 3 per cent a year. Because 96 per cent of Egypt's land area is desert, and the Egyptian people are crowded into the remaining 4 per cent along the Nile valley and delta, the population density there is nearly three times that of heavily populated Japan. In the half-century between 1897 and 1949, the population of Egypt increased by 105 per cent while its land area under cultivation expanded by a mere 14 per cent. Although irrigation has enabled Egyptians to produce two or three crops a year, and yields have improved, the country's per capita agricultural product is substantially smaller today than it was in the 19th century.²

Growth of population in India appears even more striking, for the numbers involved are much larger. India's population increased from 250 million in 1920 to 382 million in 1955; although its present rate of growth, about 1.5 per cent a year, is only one-half that of Egypt, it means an additional five million persons to be fed, clothed, and housed every 12 months in a nation already poverty-stricken. Before 1921, according to India's Registrar General R. A. Gopalaswami, the country's "cultivation had more than kept pace with the growth of population; after 1921, cultivation was lagging far behind."³

Evidence of a similar imbalance between growth of population and expansion of food supply can be found in many other underdeveloped countries. In Guatemala, for example, population shot from 1.3 million to 3.3 million in 35 years and is expanding at the rate of 3 per cent each year. Ceylon, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Thailand are among other nations whose efforts to improve standards of living are being obstructed to considerable degree by swift multiplication of their inhabitants.

DRAMATIC EFFECTS OF LOWERED MORTALITY RATES

The population of a country increases to the extent that births outnumber deaths. The birth rate in the United States has averaged about 25 per thousand inhabitants over the past decade, while the annual death rate has been

² Robert C. Cook, "Egypt's Population Explodes," *Population Bulletin*, July 1956, pp. 57-63.

³ Quoted by Robert C. Cook, "Asian Population Roundup," *Population Bulletin*, March 1955, p. 6.

Population Growth and Foreign Aid

slightly below 10 per thousand. Thus population has grown at the rate of 15 per thousand inhabitants or 1.5 per cent a year. This phenomenal and unexpected rate of growth is attributable to an increase in the U.S. birth rate from the low of 17 per thousand recorded during the 1930s.⁴

By contrast, the great surge of population in the underdeveloped countries has resulted largely from a sharp decline in death rates, with little or no change in traditionally high birth rates. In the period 1920-24 Mexico's death rate averaged 25 per thousand inhabitants; by 1955 the death rate was down to 13 per thousand. During the same period the death rate dropped from 22 to 10 per thousand in Venezuela, from 29 to 11 in Ceylon, from 23 to 8 in Japan. The death rate of the Moslem population of Algeria was 31 per thousand in 1946 but only 13 per thousand in 1953.

Many influences have contributed to the rapid decline in death rates experienced by some of the less developed nations. Improvements in transportation have helped to prevent famines from local crop failures. Far more important has been improvement of health standards through introduction of modern public health techniques and use of new drugs. Infant mortality in particular has been cut in dramatic fashion.

Following World War II, American occupation authorities in Japan carried out a massive program of vaccination, inoculation, and supplementary feeding. The death rate dropped from 17.6 per thousand in 1946 to 10.8 per thousand in 1950. More than 200,000 Japanese infants died in 1947 before reaching one year of age; by 1952, infant deaths had fallen below 100,000. The infant mortality rate was brought down from 77 per thousand to 49 per thousand live births.

An even more striking example of the results achieved by public health measures was afforded in Ceylon in 1946, when large-scale spraying of DDT was undertaken in a campaign to control malaria. In a single year the country's death rate was cut from 20.3 to 14.3 per thousand inhabitants. Infant mortality in the same period dropped from 140 to 101 per thousand live births. By 1955, the death

⁴In most other industrial nations, birth rates have remained stationary or have declined in recent years. All birth and death rates cited in this report, unless otherwise attributed, are taken from the U.N. Demographic Yearbooks for 1955 and 1956.

Editorial Research Reports

rate was down to 11 and infant mortality had dropped to 72.⁵

Because the birth rate in Ceylon has remained at about 40 per thousand, the effect of the lowered death rate has been to increase sharply the rate of population growth. Ceylon already has to import about one-half of its food, which it pays for by exporting rubber, tea, and coconut. According to Robert C. Cook, director of the Population Reference Bureau, "There is little prospect that both food production and commerce can be doubled by 1976 and redoubled again before the year 2000. Yet this is essential if present population growth rates continue."⁶

PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER DECLINE IN DEATH RATES

Death rates in many underdeveloped areas are still well above those of around 10 per thousand found in the industrialized nations of the West. The rate in 1955 was 20.6 per thousand in Guatemala, 14.8 in Ecuador, and 14.2 in El Salvador. A continuing decline in death rates is both possible and probable, because the cost of improving the health environment of any area is now small as compared with the costs of economic development.

High birth rates and falling death rates led to a tremendous increase in population in Europe and the United States during the 19th century, but under vastly different circumstances. A United Nations study points out that "The reduction of mortality and the consequent spurt of population growth were largely the effects of increasing wealth and better conditions of life for the masses." In the underdeveloped countries today, on the other hand, "The fact that life expectancy has lengthened and that fewer children are dying in infancy does not mean that the population is now better fed, clothed and housed than before."⁷

Lowering of infant mortality, coupled with a high birth rate, has had the effect of enlarging the proportion of children in the populations of many underdeveloped countries. Forty-four per cent of the Moslem population of

⁵ American participation with other nations in extensive anti-malaria activities, expected to eradicate the disease within five years in large areas of the world, was proposed by President Eisenhower in his May 21 message to Congress on foreign aid. The President pointed out that malaria annually "attacks 200 million people, bringing death to 2 million and causing enormous suffering and economic loss."

⁶ Robert C. Cook, "Population Pressure and World Peace," *Foreign Policy Bulletin*, Aug. 1, 1956, p. 174.

⁷ United Nations, *Population Growth and the Standard of Living in Underdeveloped Countries* (1954).

Population Growth and Foreign Aid

Algeria in 1953 was estimated to be under 15 years of age. The same age group made up 42 per cent of Brazil's population in 1950 and 37 per cent of India's population in 1951. Children under 15 in the United States constitute less than 27 per cent of the total population. The heavy load of dependent children in the underdeveloped countries adds to the difficulty of saving enough, over and above what is required for the support of the workers and their dependents, for needed investments in equipment for economic development.

Foreign Aid In Heavily Populated Areas

THE THREAT of overpopulation received its classic statement in 1798 when the Rev. Thomas R. Malthus published "An Essay on the Principle of Population; as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society." The gist of Malthus' argument was as follows:

Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical ratio. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio. . . . By the law of our nature which makes food necessary to the life of man, the effects of these two unequal powers must be kept equal. This implies a strong and constantly operating check on population from the difficulty of subsistence.

Malthus therefore concluded that population would always expand to the limits of the food supply; its growth beyond that point would be checked by famine and disease. "Misery and vice" were thus the inescapable lot of most men, and there was no hope for the "perfectibility of the mass of mankind."

The assumptions made by Malthus respecting rates of growth of population and subsistence are no longer accepted as sound. Although economists concede that it is theoretically possible for population to expand at a geometric rate, historically it has not done so. It has been estimated that world population rose from 275 million persons in the year 1000 A.D. to 919 million in 1800.⁸ In other words, it took 800 years for total population to triple. The fact that population now has tripled again in 157 years obscures an actual decline of fertility in the developed na-

⁸ M. K. Bennett, *The World's Food* (1954), p. 9.

Editorial Research Reports

tions. The present birth rate of 25 per thousand in the United States is less than half the rate estimated for the colonial period. Great Britain's birth rate dropped from 34 in 1851 to less than 16 in 1954.

The second postulate of Malthusianism—that sustenance is limited to an arithmetical progression—also has been modified by experience. Science and industry have paved the way for startling increases in productivity, and thus have made possible a steadily rising standard of living for more people in the developed countries of the West. But something like Malthusianism appears to be operating in many underdeveloped countries. The burden of population growth there may well be “a formidable barrier to improvements in living conditions, even if foreign aid to these countries is forthcoming; for the gap between the birth rate and the mortality rate is likely to be considerable for some time to come.”⁹

LOW PRODUCTIVITY IN OVERPOPULATED COUNTRIES

Productivity is a measure of labor output which varies widely according to the degree of economic and social development. How widely it varies is suggested by the fact that the per capita share of gross national product—a crude measure of productivity—ranges from more than \$2,300 a year in the United States down to only an estimated \$40 in Nepal.

A number of factors contribute to the low productivity found in most of the underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The great mass of their populations is engaged in subsistence agriculture, using primitive tools and techniques to eke out a precarious existence. Illiteracy is the rule; it runs to more than 80 per cent of the population in India. Although some of these countries may be potentially rich in natural resources, they have neither the skills nor the capital to develop their resources quickly.

Under such circumstances the growth of population compounds the problem of raising the standard of living. Where most of the arable land already is under cultivation, as in Egypt, any rise in the agricultural population may lead to reduced, rather than increased, productivity.

⁹ Alan T. Penock, “Malthus in the Twentieth Century,” in D. V. Glass, ed., *Introduction to Malthus* (1963), p. 70.

Population Growth and Foreign Aid

The relative abundance of labor encourages the use of methods of cultivation which require much labor to produce a small return: It may not be economical to use even simple machinery or moderately advanced tools which save labor but which add little to the amount of the crops that can be grown on the limited area of land . . . In some cases the workers, even practicing most laborious methods, are unable to keep themselves occupied on their little patches of land and spend a large part of each year in forced idleness.¹⁰

In some countries the amount of arable land may be capable of expansion, but only at considerable expenditure of capital. In the Middle East, where low rainfall tends to hold cultivation to the river valleys, irrigation offers hope of reclaiming large areas of desert. Egypt hopes to increase its crop acreage by one-fourth to one-third by building a high dam at Aswan on the Nile River. But all that can be hoped for from this and other reclamation projects, according to an Egyptian study, is to halt the present rapid fall in the standard of living: It has been said that "The various development projects must be carried out in their entirety, and at the rapid pace visualized, in order just to keep abreast of the population growth during the next decade."¹¹

INSUFFICIENCY OF SAVINGS AND CAPITAL FORMATION

Economists are agreed on the broad steps which need to be taken by underdeveloped countries to achieve a rising standard of living. Agriculture must be made more productive by improvements in land utilization, by more extensive use of fertilizer, and through other measures which tend to increase crop yields. Manufacturing industries and service trades must be expanded to absorb the increasing supply of labor and eventually to drain off some of the surplus farm population. Public services in education, transportation, and other fields must be extended.

All of these steps require a substantial investment of capital. Even without any increase in population, investment of 3 or 4 per cent of gross national product is needed to raise an economy's output by 1 per cent. Where population is growing rapidly, economic improvement requires investment of a proportionately larger share of total product. A University of Chicago study, prepared for the Senate's Special Committee to Study the Foreign Aid Pro-

¹⁰ United Nations, *Population Growth and the Standard of Living in Underdeveloped Countries* (1954).

¹¹ National Population Commission, *The Population Problem in Egypt* (1955).

Editorial Research Reports

gram, asserted recently that "An economy can break out of the vicious circle of poverty and underdevelopment only if it succeeds in allocating a minimum of 15 per cent of its gross national product for capital investment."¹²

Few underdeveloped countries have achieved any such rate of investment. The Chicago study estimated that in 1954 Egypt and Pakistan made gross investments equal to about 5 per cent of gross national product. Indonesia attained a ratio of 6 per cent, Mexico 8.4 per cent, and India 10 per cent. By contrast, the investment ratio in the United States was about 19 per cent, in West Germany 26 per cent, in Israel 25 per cent, and in Japan 24 per cent.

Personal savings, which constitute an important source of investment capital in industrial countries, are virtually non-existent in economies dominated by subsistence agriculture. Small land holdings yield barely enough to feed their cultivators. Where land is held by absentee owners, payments of rent supply a form of savings which could be invested in productive projects. In many countries, however, wealth accumulated by landlords is squandered on conspicuous consumption or invested abroad.

In the absence of any significant amount of voluntary saving, underdeveloped countries must turn to forced saving, whether through inflation or taxation, to obtain funds for capital investment. Inflation is of limited value as a source of funds in subsistence economies and carries many disadvantages. Taxation may be an effective means of curtailing consumption, but when the bulk of the population is already close to a minimum subsistence level, tax yields are relatively small.

India's experience under its first five-year plan (1951-56) demonstrated the scope of the investment problem in underdeveloped countries whose populations are expanding. The government planned to invest about \$5 billion over the period (of which less than \$1 billion was to come from foreign aid) and actually laid out \$4.2 billion. Investments were made in irrigation, transport and communications, electric power, manufacturing, and mineral projects. They helped to bring about an increase in total production of 12 to 13 per cent, but the country's population growth held the

¹² Research Center in Economic Development and Cultural Change in the University of Chicago, *The Role of Foreign Aid in the Development of Other Countries* (March 1967), p. 4.

Population Growth and Foreign Aid

per capita increase to 1 per cent a year. Industrial output rose by 50 per cent from 1950 to 1954, while industrial employment remained at 2½ million and real wages increased only slightly. "Unemployment, both open and 'disguised,' actually increased, the total labor force increasing by about 9 million, while employment only increased by half as much."¹³

India's second five-year plan, announced last year, calls for government investment of \$10 billion, a 25 per cent increase in output of goods and services, new jobs for two million persons in agriculture and eight million in other fields, and holding unemployment down to the existing level. Even with the help of private investment and \$900 million in aid from foreign countries, attainment of these goals will require a substantial increase in the rate of saving. The University of Chicago study noted that the gap between available resources and those needed to finance the plan might run to \$5.5 billion.

NEED FOR DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FROM OUTSIDE

"Launching a country into self-sustaining growth," according to another study prepared for the Senate's special foreign aid committee, "is a little like getting an airplane off the ground. There is a critical ground speed which must be passed before the craft can become airborne; to taxi up and down the runway at lower speeds is a waste of gasoline."¹⁴ If the size of the aircraft is growing while the length of the runway is diminishing, the difficulty of getting up in the air is all the greater. That is the problem facing Egypt, India, and other underdeveloped, overpopulated countries.

It is now generally agreed that such areas will need substantial and sustained economic assistance for a number of years. How much aid will be required is debatable. Total income in 1955 of the underdeveloped countries of Africa, the Near East, and Asia (excluding China) has been estimated at \$110 billion. If it is assumed that investment should approximate 15 per cent of total product and that internal savings might supply 10 per cent, something on the order of \$5 billion a year in foreign assistance would be required for those regions alone.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁴ Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, *The Objectives of United States Economic Assistance Programs* (January 1957), p. 70.

Editorial Research Reports

Before World War I, private investment supplied much of the capital going into economic development of many remote lands. It has been estimated that foreign capital invested in the United States totaled \$6 billion or \$7 billion in 1914. British, French, and German investments in other countries then amounted to \$32.5 billion. Had private foreign investment since 1914 kept pace with the increasing value of world production, it would stand today at something like \$300 billion. The actual total is nothing like that amount. Private long-term foreign investment by the United States, now the world's leading exporter of capital, stood at \$26.6 billion in 1955.¹⁵ All except about \$3.2 billion of the total was invested in Canada, Latin America, and Europe.

Expanding capital requirements at home and an unfavorable investment climate in many areas abroad have worked to limit the amount of private foreign investment. The main burden of supplying the capital requirements of underdeveloped nations has fallen on governments, operating through foreign aid programs or through institutions like the U.S. Export-Import Bank and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Of \$4.6 billion disbursed by the United States in foreign aid in fiscal 1956, about \$3 billion went for military programs and only about \$1 billion for measures contributing to economic development.

In a statement on Apr. 8, outlining the need for a long-term economic development fund; Secretary of State Dulles said that loans from such a fund "might come to reach \$750 million a year." A smaller amount would be needed for grants, he said, while technical assistance programs costing \$150 million a year should be continued. Additional sums would still be supplied by the Export-Import Bank, the International Bank, and private investors. Some capital also would be forthcoming from European countries with interests in the underdeveloped areas.

PLAN FOR AN AMERICAN REVOLVING LOAN FUND

The special Senate foreign aid committee endorsed the Dulles recommendation in its final report on May 12. In a special message to Congress on foreign aid, May 21, President Eisenhower formally proposed that Congress estab-

¹⁵ See "American Private Investment Abroad," *E.R.R.*, Vol. I 1953, pp. 151-153.

Population Growth and Foreign Aid.

lish "a development loan fund to finance specific projects and programs which give promise of contributing to sound development . . . of long-term benefit to the borrowing country." The President said that all assistance from the fund would be provided "essentially on a loan basis." Last year's foreign aid act had required 80 per cent of development assistance to be in loans instead of grants.

To get the development loan fund into operation, Eisenhower proposed an initial appropriation of \$500 million. He anticipated that an additional \$750 million would be required in each of the two succeeding fiscal years. When the Senate Foreign Relations Committee reported the foreign aid bill, June 7, it recommended authorization of an appropriation of the full \$500 million asked for initial capital. It recommended also a grant of authority for Treasury loans to the fund in the amount of \$750 million in each of the fiscal years 1959 and 1960—to bring a \$2 billion revolving loan fund into being within three years.

The President had proposed that the loan fund be established and administered in the International Cooperation Administration, the agency headed by John B. Hollister which handles foreign aid operations. However, the Senate committee revised the administration bill to give the State Department a measure of supervision over operations of the development loan fund. It did so by providing for an advisory loan committee under the chairmanship of the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, now Douglas C. Dillon. Hollister is expected to be named administrator of the loan fund, but he will be only vice chairman of the advisory committee. Although he will have the right to make loans the committee has advised against, he will be required in such cases to submit his reasons for doing so in writing to the advisory committee and to the Senate Foreign Relations and House Foreign Affairs committees.

After less than three days of debate, the Senate passed the foreign aid authorization bill, June 14, by a vote of 57 to 25. No change was made in provisions for the development loan fund. The House has still to act, and the proposed financing arrangements will be subject to a second look in the course of action by both chambers on the separate foreign aid appropriation bill, but authority to make long-term commitments for foreign economic aid now appears nearer realization than ever before.

Outlook for Controlling Population Growth

NO PROPOSALS so far advanced promise the underdeveloped countries of Asia and Africa assistance from the West in amounts approaching the \$5 billion a year which it has been suggested they need in foreign investment. This is one more reason for the concern voiced by economists over the growth of population in those countries, and for the rising interest in methods of curbing the rate of population increase.

The West never has had to face the problem of dealing under comparable conditions with a rate of population growth as large as the 3 per cent a year prevailing in countries like Egypt and Ceylon. Fewer than four million persons inhabited the United States in 1790. The nation's great need was for more people to clear and settle a seemingly limitless land area. The immigrants who later arrived from Europe by the millions formed a priceless addition to capital. Population continued to grow and to be absorbed in an expanding economy, but industrialization and the rising concentration of population in urban areas were accompanied by a steady decline in human fertility.

The situation of underdeveloped countries today is quite different. With few exceptions, they are at or near the outer limits of available arable land. Opportunities for migration, which helped to relieve population pressures in 19th century Europe, are generally regarded as negligible for Asiatics.¹⁶ There is little prospect that industrialization can be relied on to produce the economic and social climate conducive to lower birth rates in time to help solve current problems.

After a study of India's 1951 census, that country's Registrar General, R. A. Gopalaswami, reported as follows:

Our appraisal of the possibilities of development of agricultural productivity has led us to the conclusion that it might be possible to achieve an over-all increase in agricultural productivity by about one-third of its present level—and this would correspond to the needs of a total population strength of 450 million. This may be reached sometime round about 1969. That would give us a

¹⁶ See "Overpopulation," *E.R.R.*, Vol. I 1962, pp. 398-409. An Indonesian delegate to the United Nations announced, Apr. 18, that his government was considering a gradual shift of 15 million people from Java to less populated islands of Indonesia.

Population Growth and Foreign Aid

maximum of about 15 years for planned measures to limit births to become effective and yield results . . .

Let us then define our general aim to be: so to limit the number of births that they do not materially exceed the number of deaths and thus achieve a substantially stationary population before our number exceeds 450 million.¹⁷

Efforts to check growth of population have been condoned, if not pursued as a matter of government policy, in a number of societies in the past. Infanticide was not uncommon in China and Japan at one time. Postponement of marriage served to cut the birth rate of Ireland markedly during the 19th century.¹⁸ More recently, the development and widespread use of contraceptives has enabled the highly literate and economically advanced populations of Europe and the United States to limit the size of families. Whatever the method employed, however, most authorities agree that birth rates fall only when there is a general and strong desire to raise fewer children.

JAPAN'S EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN TO CUT BIRTH RATE

The outstanding case of an effective campaign to limit births is found in Japan, whose population problem in many respects is akin to that of India and Egypt. The Japanese population has grown from 55 million in 1920 to about 90 million today. The average daily food intake is about 2,180 calories a person, compared to 2,338 calories in Egypt, 2,124 in Pakistan, and 2,004 in India. The pressure of population on Japan's limited arable land area has become particularly intense since World War II.

About one-half the Japanese farm households till less than one acre, or a total of one-fifth the cultivated land, and are unable to produce enough food for family needs . . . In 1950-55, Tokyo grew at an average annual net rate of 350,000 people, of whom three-fourths were migrants from the rural villages and towns of other prefectures.

With the Japanese economy expanding too slowly to absorb all of the rural overflow, the population and employment problems in both rural and urban areas can be expected to grow in seriousness . . . Cities are now expanding more rapidly on former farmland than new farmland is being added. Lands lost to the city are generally high quality paddy, while lands reclaimed are of inferior quality and unirrigable.¹⁹

¹⁷ Quoted by Robert C. Cook, "Asian Population Roundup," *Population Bulletin*, March 1955, pp. 9-10.

¹⁸ Emigration, however, was the leading factor in reducing the population of Ireland from more than 8 million in 1840 to 4.3 million in 1954.

¹⁹ John D. Eyre, "Post-Occupation Conditions in Rural Japan," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, November 1954, pp. 117-119.

Editorial Research Reports

Faced by a population crisis, the Japanese government legalized abortion and subsidized instruction in use of contraceptives. The Eugenic Protection Law of 1948, which sanctioned abortion for health purposes, was soon amended to permit abortion for economic reasons. As a result, the number of abortions (which may cost as little as \$2.75) reported to authorities rose from 245,000 in 1949 to more than 1.1 million in 1954.

A Eugenic Protection Council maintains 800 offices throughout Japan to dispense information on birth control. The government announced plans last year to train 30,000 instructors in use of contraceptives. A survey by the Japanese Institute of Population Studies in 1955 showed that 37.2 per cent of married couples in the cities, and 30.4 per cent in rural areas, were practicing birth control.²⁰

Japan's birth rate declined from 34.3 per thousand inhabitants in 1947 to 19.4 per thousand in 1955. With the death rate falling, over the same period, from 14.6 to about 8 per thousand, the annual rate of population growth dropped from 2 per cent to about 1.1 per cent. That rate of increase, however, is substantially the same as in the period 1920-24. Whether Japan can drive its birth rate down much further is open to question. Almost no countries today have birth rates lower than 15 per thousand.

POPULATION CONTROL EFFORTS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Measures to hold down births have drawn increasing attention in a number of underdeveloped countries. Egypt's interest received official recognition in 1953, after the ousting of King Farouk, when a National Commission for Population Problems was established. The first of 12 family planning clinics, privately operated but government-subsidized, was opened in October 1955. India's current five-year plan allocates more than \$10 million to the work of checking population growth. The government expects to have 300 urban and 2,000 rural family planning clinics in operation by 1961. Prime Minister Nehru, in a foreword to a recent Health Ministry publication, called family planning of utmost importance to the future of India.

Communist China's first official census, in 1953, reported a mainland population of 583 million, well above previous

²⁰ Shio Sakanishi, "Women's Position and the Family System," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, November 1956, pp. 137-138.

Population Growth and Foreign Aid

estimates. Birth and death rates were given as 37 and 17 per thousand, respectively, which indicated that the population was increasing at a rate of 2 per cent. Latest estimates put the annual increase at 13 million to 15 million.

Chinese society traditionally has venerated the man with many sons, while orthodox Marxism considers labor the source of all value and treats Malthusianism as a capitalistic theory with no validity for a well organized Socialist society. But the 1953 census apparently generated second thoughts among Chinese Communists. At the National People's Congress in September 1954, a deputy dwelt on the problem of educating China's growing population and concluded: "It is a good thing to have a large population, but in an environment beset with difficulties, it appears that there should be a limit set . . . Medical theories on contraception must be propagated, and contraceptives and practical guidance on contraception should be supplied and given."²¹

This view was soon adopted as the official party line. Articles emphasizing the need for birth control and describing methods of contraception began to appear in popular journals throughout the country. Last August the Minister of Health "formally directed all health offices to press a campaign to spread birth control information through the use of posters, a wide distribution of supplies, and an educational program aimed at the various mass organizations."²² Mao Tse-tung, Red China's chief of state, reportedly warned last winter that food and school shortages made it imperative to keep China's population at the 600-million level "for a long time."

IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES

Public attitudes are likely to determine the success or failure of efforts to reduce birth rates. In approaching this problem Japan enjoys a distinct advantage over Egypt for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the fact that 95 per cent of the Japanese population is literate as contrasted with only 22 per cent in Egypt. Of possibly greater importance is the fact that the idea of population control is not alien to the Japanese culture, as it is to the Moslem culture of Egypt.

²¹ Cited by Robert C. Cook, "China's Achilles Heel: Explosive Population Growth," *Population Bulletin*, December 1956, p. 138.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 142.

Editorial Research Reports

In the West the Roman Catholic Church strongly opposes use of artificial methods of limiting births.²³ Catholic authorities nevertheless have shown concern over the problem of mounting population. Last year the International Catholic Institute for Social Research announced a contest, with a \$5,000 prize, for the best essay on ways to influence growth of population in underdeveloped areas.

The high correlation found between fertility rates, the extent of literacy, and the degree of economic development makes it unlikely that the problem of changing public attitudes toward birth control can be solved quickly in underdeveloped countries. Because nothing less than a complete transformation of social structure is implied, it seems clear that a campaign limited to dissemination of birth control information can have little effect so long as illiteracy is the rule and urban employment the exception. Planning for economic development, therefore, may itself contribute importantly to the success of efforts to limit births.

If deliberate diffusion of new industry through the small towns and rural areas of India, accompanied by special efforts in rural health, education and community development, could be shown to change family patterns of more people more rapidly than a concentrated industrial development centering in the great cities, then the former might bring a more substantial economic advance than the latter. This might be true even if the urban type of development raised total output more quickly and at less cost.²⁴

Such a course of action would require sound planning free of political interference—something not likely to be achieved in most underdeveloped countries, where the tendency is to place primary emphasis on development of urban industries as the quickest means of increasing total output. Yet the declining birth rate normally associated with urbanization holds little prospect of curbing population growth to a substantial extent in the immediate future.

²³ There is evidence to suggest that the people of Catholic countries do not all adhere uniformly to church doctrine in this respect. The birth rate in Italy dropped from 30 per thousand in 1920-24 to 18 per thousand in 1955. In Puerto Rico, where population was increasing at a rate of 2.8 per cent in 1955, sterilization of women is reportedly a growing practice.

²⁴ Eugene Staley, *The Future of Underdeveloped Countries* (1964), p. 284.

Political Implications of Population Problem

SPEAKING on a Voice of America radio program on Oct. 14, 1956, Arnold Toynbee, English historian, said: "The problem of limiting the birth rate will have to be faced. The alternative is starvation. And freedom from want is now being claimed as a right all over the world, even in regions where, till lately, wholesale death by famine was still being taken as a matter of course."

Some scientists, looking hopefully to prospects of developing new and abundant sources of food from algae and synthetics, do not consider starvation inevitable if world population continues to grow at the current rate of 1.5 per cent a year. A more immediate danger, however, is the threat of political upheaval in countries where population growth is frustrating hopes of rapid improvement in the standard of living.

Egypt, Indonesia, and some other low-income, heavily populated countries are the very areas where the spirit of nationalism and anti-colonialism is in full sway. Democratic institutions in those countries are weak and faltering, and economic progress is considered more important than the means by which it may be attained. Even where the political attraction of Communism is small, as in the Arab countries, the tremendous economic growth achieved by the Soviet Union, using totalitarian methods of capital formation, offers strong appeal. Should Communist China, using a similar approach, be able to achieve a sustained measure of economic growth, other Asian countries might be expected to follow her example.

The United States and its allies are already working against heavy odds in these areas. The economic characteristics of India and Egypt are far closer to those of Communist China, or even of the Soviet Union, than to those of the United States. In addition, the widening gap between the wealth of the United States and that of the underdeveloped areas is a source of envy and distrust which no amount of foreign aid appears capable of erasing.

The size of this gap and the difficulty of closing it are illustrated by steel production figures. The volume of

Editorial Research Reports

steel in use in the United States amounts to 8 tons per capita and is increasing at a rate of about 0.3 tons a year. India, where steel in use is negligible, is producing 1.8 million tons of pig iron a year and plans to produce 6 million tons annually by 1961. On the assumption that India will be able to double its production every ten years, it has been estimated that about 2 billion tons will have been produced by the year 2000, which is equivalent to only 5 tons for every person now living in India.

But when we take into account the fact that the population of India is increasing rapidly, and when we further take into account the losses involved in the steel cycle, . . . we are forced to the conclusion that, even with a doubling time of ten years, at least a half century would be required for India to achieve a level of per capita productivity such as that which existed in Japan immediately prior to World War II.²⁵

This gives some indication of how unchecked population growth can thwart expectations of economic progress. To the extent that that happens, it may nullify efforts of the United States, through foreign aid or other measures, to assist underdeveloped countries to attain a higher standard of living in an atmosphere of political freedom.

²⁵ Harrison Brown, "A Changed and Changing World," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, October 1956, p. 303.

